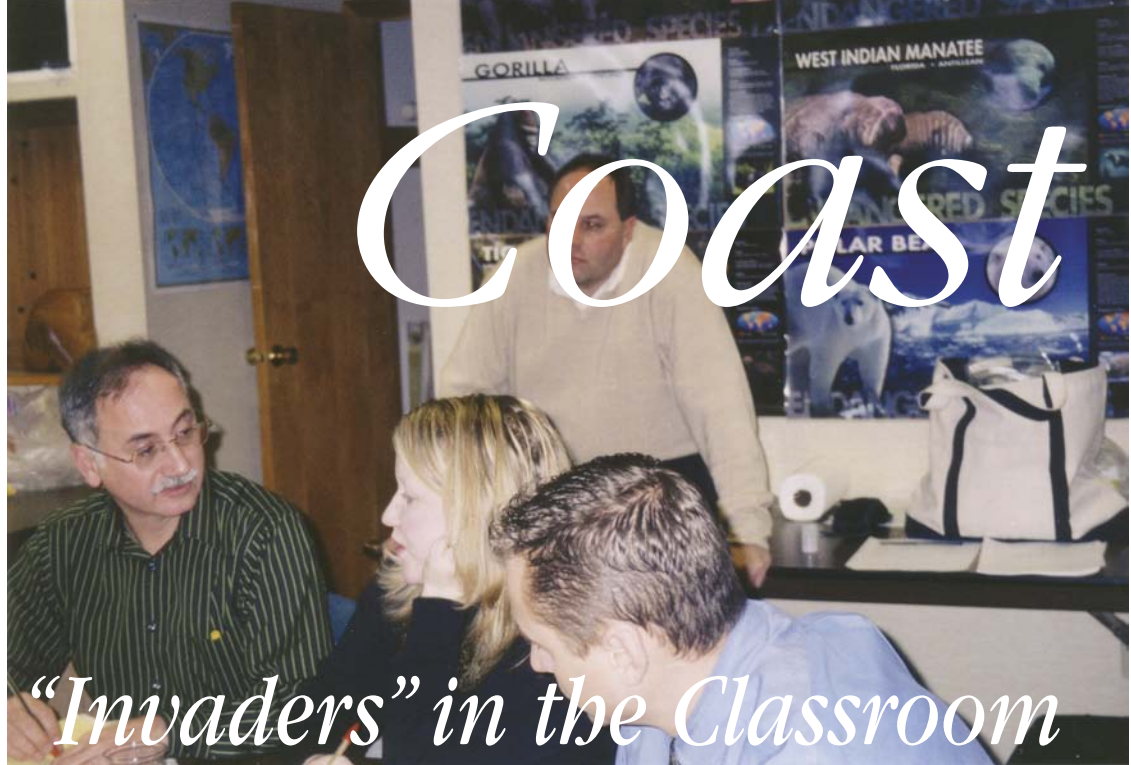


Coast

Garry Dole was on hand to provide assistance to teachers Dan Lawrence, Jennifer Neri and Greg Lauer during the workshop.



“Invaders” in the Classroom

How do you get students interested in learning about round gobies, ruffe and sea lamprey? You call in the “law” in the form of characters like Detective ID or Detective Ecofriend to help students in grades 4-10 who want to help book “invaders” for their crimes against the environment.

Nab the Aquatic Invader! Be a Sea Grant Super Sleuth is a new educational Web site created by several Great Lakes Sea Grant programs that provides the latest information about aquatic invasive species (AIS) through colorful characters and a crime-solving theme. The idea for the Web site was originally conceived by **Robin Goettel** of Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant and **Helen Domske** of New York Sea Grant. The student-friendly pages were developed into a useful learning tool that now has the potential to reach students from the Great Lakes and coastal areas around the country.

“In creating this site, our goal was bridging the knowledge gap, connecting the abundant information available on AIS with teachers and students, and presenting it in an exciting and understandable way,” said Helen Domske, New York Sea Grant education specialist. The site is part of the *Sea Grant Nonindigenous Species Web* (SGNIS) site, which contains a wealth of AIS information.

Funding from the National Sea Grant College Program will allow for expansion of the site and provide a broader perspective by adding invasive species from waters beyond the Great Lakes. Sea Grant programs in Oregon, Connecticut, and Louisiana will be adding marine invaders to the

list of suspects. Sea Grant educators will also enhance the educational content and incorporate more teacher-tested activities and a community stewardship component

The Web site homepage (www.sgnis.org/kids) introduces student investigators to five detectives, each focused on specific aspects of AIS criminal cases. For example, Detective Ecofriend is an expert on the environmental effects of AIS, while Detective Dollars and Sense investigates the economic impacts of these invaders. Each character is a fun and colorful cartoon. Teachers are given a special spot on the Web site under *Top Desk Administrator* which offers links to resources such as curriculum, videos, CDs, fact sheets, books, maps, posters, and more!



Watch

Judy Maynard and Carolyn Kick check out the web site.
Photos by Helen Domske

The *Meet the Suspects* page illustrates the 10 Most Wanted, a variety of cartoon criminals, including Zeke “the Prowler” Zebra Mussel, Purple “Lucky” Loosestrife and Gabby “the Lowlife” Round Goby. Each suspect has been interrogated, and the transcripts provide student investigators with critical information for solving these cases. Crime solving involves taking part in quizzes, games, and other brain teasers that test the student investigator’s knowledge about invasive species and their impacts.

As part of the grant, on December 14, 2005, New York Sea Grant brought 23 teachers to the Erie 2 BOCES, Science Resources Center to learn about the Nab the Aquatic Invader Web site. **Garry Dole**, Science Resources Coordinator and teacher training specialist, provided computer set-ups for the teachers to use as they explored the site and came up with suggestions to improve the pages. Many of these teachers will help to create new activities for the Web site and serve as “Nab the Aquatic Invader” representatives who will share the site with other teachers at conferences and professional development programs and serve as mentors to train other teachers.

The responses to the Web site were very positive and many of the teachers commented on the look of the pages and the educational potential of the site. **Jennifer Neri**, from Fredonia Middle School, liked

the idea of the “Super Sleuth” and the colorful characters on the site. She was “excited to finally have a site for Invaders that is kid-friendly.”

Stacy Brand, of Washington Middle School in Jamestown, indicated that the site offered “good possibilities for special-needs learners and activities could be adapted and used with existing software programs to facilitate instruction.” She also stated that there was a “good tie-in with current 5th grade science existing curriculum that meets NYS standards.” Many of the teachers indicated that they would like to have sound added to the site and a roll-over glossary for more difficult terms. These comments and suggestions will go a long way to improving the Web site.

Although just in its developmental infancy, the initial Web site design has already won awards from the Association for Communications Excellence and NOAA Sea Grant, and thus has the potential of becoming a valuable education tool on invasive species. A community stewardship component will be incorporated to help students share their new-found knowledge on invasive species with other students and members of their communities.

New York Sea Grant welcomes comments from other educators and stakeholders who did not attend the workshop. After checking out the site, please feel free to email Helen Domske at (hmd4@cornell.edu) with your comments or suggestions. We invite you to bookmark the site on your computer to keep up with the exciting changes that the grant will bring and encourage youngsters to become Sea Grant Super Sleuths!

— **Helen Domske**



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